



Business Intelligence Glossary

Purpose: This is a business intelligence glossary of terms. The document includes MSU unique acronyms and phases

TERM	TERM DEFINITION
Ad-hoc Query	The ability to create an immediate 'request for information' using an analytical reporting tool to answer a specific business question.
Alert	A message that is sent automatically by a computer system when a certain situation occurs. Allows user to receive critical business information immediately.
Business Analytics	A technique that makes it easier to visualize and analyze business data to support decision making
Business Intelligence (BI)	Business Intelligence is a broad term for software reporting tools that pull data from various sources to generate customizable reports. It will allow administrators and other university decision makers to view reliable, timely data.
Business Intelligence Portal (BIP)	Customizable web-browser based applications that provide "one stop" access to each user's most relevant data and tools.
Business Intelligence Tools	Software that enables business users to see and use large amounts of complex data.
Balanced Scorecard	A performance management tool that summarizes an organization's performance from multiple perspectives on a single page.
Business Performance Management (BPM)	The combination of planning, budgeting, financial consolidation, reporting, strategy planning and score carding tools. Most vendors using the term do not offer the full set of components, so they adjust their version of the definition to suit their own product set.
Dashboard	A dashboard is a visual display of the most important information needed to achieve one or more objectives; consolidated and arranged on a single screen so the information can be monitored at a glance. They provide intuitive indicators, such as gauges and stoplights, show the state of the business at the exact instant the dashboard is viewed or refreshed.
Data Field	A data field holds a single fact. Consider a date field, e.g. "September 19, 2004". This can be treated as a single date field (e.g. birth date), or 3 fields, namely, month, day of month and year.
Data File	A data file is a collection of related records. If there are 100 employees, then each employee would have a record (e.g. called Employee Personal Details record) and the collection of 100 such records would constitute a file (in this case, called Employee Personal Details file).
Data Hierarchy	Data Hierarchy refers to the systematic organization of data, often in a hierarchical form. Data organization involves fields, records, files



Enterprise Business Systems Projects Business Intelligence Glossary

	and so on.
Data Mart	An analytical data store focused on one particular business function designed to serve a particular community of knowledge workers. Often, the data mart is sourced from a sub set of data in a data warehouse and sometimes stored in a cube format for faster analysis.
Data Mining	The process of finding hidden patterns and relationships in the data.
Data Record	A data record is a collection of related fields. An Employee record may contain a name field(s), address fields, birth date field and so on.
Data Warehouse	A central repository for all or significant parts of the data collected by the various business systems of the university.
Dimension	Structural attribute of a cube describing the data, for example, 'Time', 'Client/Customer', 'Product' or 'Geography'. A dimension acts as an index for identifying values within a multi-dimensional array.
Drill Down	The term "drill down" is the process of finding more detailed data by displaying data at a lower level than was previously shown.
Drill Up	"Drill up" is the process of finding less detailed data by displaying data at a higher level of aggregation.
End-User	An individual or organization that accesses digital information for business purposes.
Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)	Complex applications used by large enterprises to manage inventory and integrate business processes across multiple divisions and organizational boundaries, frequently the application backbone in many large enterprises.
Extract, Transform and Load (ETL)	This three stage process delivers data from source systems into a data warehouse. First, the extract function reads data from a specified source database and extracts a desired subset of data. Next, the transform function works with the acquired data - using rules or lookup tables, or creating combinations with other data - to convert it to the desired state. Finally, the load function is used to write the resulting data (either all of the subset or just the changes) to a target database. The term is also used to describe software tools that automate all or some of this process.
Hierarchy	Data organized by dimensions into parent-child relationships, for example 'Quarter' is the parent of 'Month' in a 'Time' dimension.
Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	A measure of something that is strategically important to the business.
Metric	A measure of something.
Metadata	Data about data. How the structures and calculation rules are stored, plus, additional information on data sources, definitions, quality, transformations, date of last update, user access privileges, etc.
Model	A multi-dimensional structure including calculation rules and data.



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Business Intelligence Glossary

Multi-dimensional Analysis	A technique for visualizing and analyzing business metrics across different points of view. For example, a user may request that revenue data be analyzed to display all products sold in a given region in the month of January, then compare revenue figures with those for the same products in September, and then see a comparison of sales in another region in the same time period.
Open Database Connectivity (ODBC)	A standard Application Program Interface (API) used to communicate with database management systems, developed by Microsoft.
Operational Data Store (ODS)	A type of database that replicates data from operational systems and is updated at or near to the same frequency of the operational systems. The ODS is then used for querying by users. An ODS is often an interim stage before implementing a data warehouse.
Portal	A central place for making all types of information accessible via the web to a wide and varied audience. Portals provide a secure, single point of interaction that can be personalized to a user's needs and responsibilities.
Query	A request for information placed to a computer system or database.
Report	A report displays the results of a query. There are a variety of options for arranging and formatting displayed data.
Relational Database	A method of structuring data in the form of records so that relations between different entities and attributes can be used for data access and transformation.
Reporting Tool	A software tool that allows end users to build professional business reports based on data in a database. These reports can then be scheduled to run automatically at particular times and distributed to a group of end users who are interested in the information.
Scorecard	A scorecard is a "report card" of how a given person, unit or entity performed with respect to certain goals over a given time period. Items on a scorecard would be displayed as a measure over a period of time (usually monthly or quarterly), and would be typically be benchmarked against specific goals.
Slice and Dice	Term used in the context of multi-dimensional analysis to describe the examination of business metrics from different perspectives.